

The Perils of SocialMedia: Its Impact on Youth Mental Health, Marital relationships and Effect on the generation Alpha

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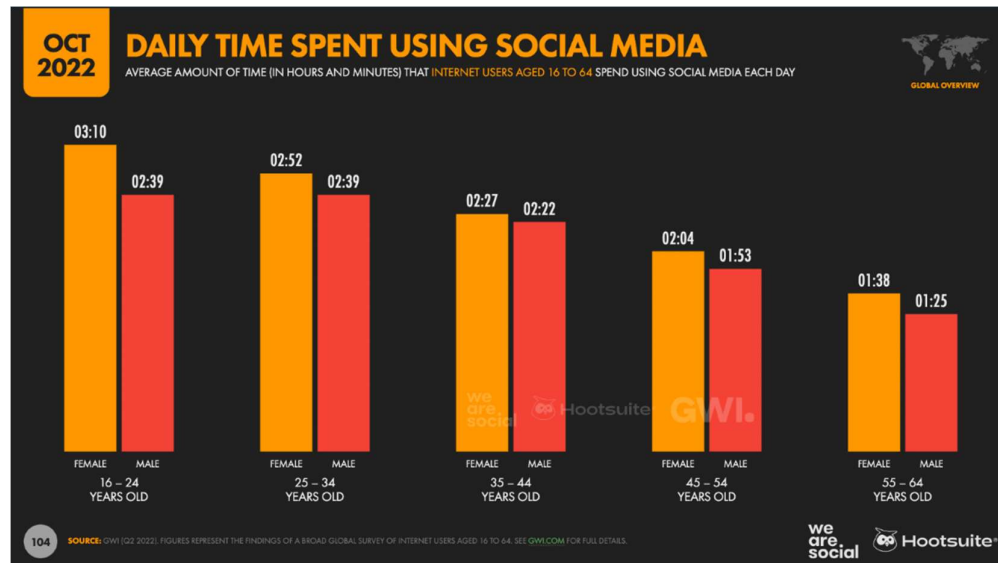
Abstract

The rise of social media has transformed the way we communicate, connect, and share information. This technological evolution has not only reshaped the fabric of society but has also had a profound impact on the mental health and interpersonal relationships of today's youth. The implications of this shift extend beyond the immediate generation, affecting even the emerging Generation Alpha. This research paper investigates the profound impact of social media on the mental health of today's youth, its detrimental effect on close relationships, and the resulting transgenerational consequences on the emerging Generation Alpha. The study utilized a structured survey form, employing a 5-point Likert scale, to collect primary data. Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS, and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin factor analysis was employed to establish correlations between the factors affecting mental health and relationships and how these factors transcend to the next generation. After careful analysis, three significant factors emerged from the study: mental health and social relationships, positively correlated impact, and dissatisfaction with subsequent effects on Generation Alpha. The findings revealed that negative mental health and overall dissatisfaction among today's youth significantly influence their well-being and have consequential impacts on their relationships and children. The research underscores the immediate importance of addressing these issues caused due to excessive usage of social media, to create a healthier and more resilient society for generations to come.

Key words: Social Media, Generation Alpha, Mental Health, Transgenerational Effect, Generation Z.

INTRODUCTION:

In an era dominated by technology, social media platforms have emerged as influential forces shaping the lives of young individuals. Findings made by **Forbes** in **2023** showed that an estimate of 4.9 billion people used social media across the world, with the average person spending about 145 minutes on social media every day.



Image¹ showing the avg amount of time (in hours and minutes) spent on social media by internet users aged between 16-64.

With this growing ubiquity of smartphones and the increasing ease of access to online networks, the impact of social media on youth mental health has become an area of concern. Moreover, as these youth transition into adulthood and eventually become parents, the repercussions of their mental health struggles are likely to extend to the next generation. Additionally, the pervasive nature of social media has threatened the foundation of marital relationships, leading to heightened chances of infidelity and diminished emotional availability.

This research paper aims to explore the negative consequences of social media usage on the mental well-being of youth and the subsequent effects on their future offspring, because the **Generation Z**, who are the first ones to have been born in the Era of Internet and social media are going through mental difficulties that their previous generations didn't, hence it becomes critical to analyze the impact that Social media is going to have on them as parents & consequently on their children, the **Generation Alpha**. Furthermore, the research will delve into the ways in which social media intrudes upon marital relationships, impacting fidelity and emotional connection between partners. By shedding light on these interconnected issues, this study intends to proactively raise awareness and prompt further investigation into the consequences of the digital age on the psychological landscape of young individuals and their families and the transgenerational effects of this.

The Impact on Youth Mental Health

Social media platforms offered a virtual world where young individuals could connect, share, and express themselves. However, the constant exposure to curated content, idealized representations, and social comparison inherent in these digital spaces had a detrimental impact on their mental health. Studies have shown a correlation between excessive social media use and increased rates of anxiety, depression, loneliness, and body image dissatisfaction among youth. A study by **Amedie (2015)** had demonstrated that social media became a significant reason for anxiety and depression among young people. It had also been found that 47% of the youth were affected mentally due to overutilization of social media, and 29% of the youth had faced problems like strain on the mind, which had eroded their inner self-confidence (**Singh et al., 2017**).

The relentless pursuit of validation, the fear of missing out (FOMO), and cyberbullying had further contributed to the psychological distress experienced by young people, ultimately hindering their overall well-being.

The Transgenerational Effect: Impact on Generation Alpha

As the youth of that time embarked on their journey into adulthood and eventually became parents, their mental health struggles influenced their parenting styles and, consequently, their children's well-being. **Michelle Drouin et al. (2020)** had found in her study that greater child anxiety was associated with greater parent anxiety.

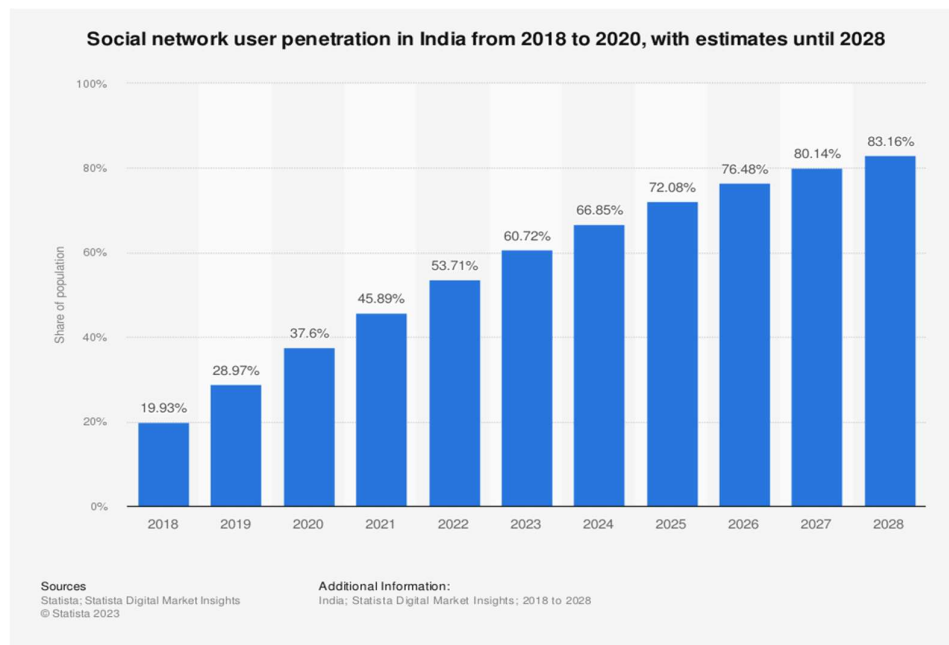
Parents who had grown up in an era heavily influenced by social media had carried their own emotional scars, affecting their ability to provide nurturing and supportive environments for their children. A study by **Turner et al.** had reported the odds of anxiety disorders to be more than seven times greater in children of parents with anxiety disorders than in children of psychiatrically healthy parents. Thus, the negative repercussions of social media on youth mental health had the potential to reverberate across generations, perpetuating a cycle of psychological distress. The next generation following Generation Z, known as the **Generation Alpha**, would be its significant target.

Marital Relationships in the Digital Age

Beyond the individual impact, social media has also infiltrated the realm of intimate relationships. The temptation of endless virtual connections and the availability of platforms for discreet interactions had raised concerns about the fidelity and emotional availability of partners. Excessive social media use had been associated with increased rates of infidelity, as well as decreased relationship satisfaction and overall marital quality. The amount of divorce and separation in people who spent a lot of time on social networks had been far more than those who experienced life without social networking (**Ziba Barghi Irani et al., 2019**). The allure of online connections and the blurring of boundaries in the digital realm had eroded trust, intimacy, and communication, thus destabilizing the foundation of healthy and fulfilling partnerships.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

The impact of social media on youth mental health has garnered significant attention in recent years. Numerous studies have already explored the negative consequences of excessive social media usage on the well-being of young individuals. These studies have shed light on the various factors contributing to mental health issues among youth in the digital age. However, the literature review induced the correlation between the effect that social media had on youth mental health, its transition into anxiety and depression which ultimately transcended to the Generation Alpha. It is a domain which has not been worked upon very much because these consequences are not yet visible but are of utmost importance.



Image² Showing social network user penetration in India from 2018- 2020.

Anxiety & Depression

Effects of using social media had impacted the health and mental-related behavior of youth, who were not yet mature enough to differentiate between fantasy and reality; its unnecessary utilization has prompted elevated

misery, uneasiness, and disappointment with life (**Woods and Scott, 2016**). Excessive use of it had also led to heightened depression, anxiety, distress, unhappiness, thus deteriorating mental health (**Suryakant C. Deogade, 2018. Primack et al., 2017**).

One key area of concern had been the constant exposure to curated content and idealized representations on social media platforms. The phenomenon of social comparison has been identified as a significant contributor to negative mental health outcomes. **Amedie (2015)** discussed how social media could lead to anxiety and depression in young people, emphasizing the role of comparing oneself to others. This comparison had often led to feelings of inadequacy and a distorted perception of reality. Studies have shown that excessive social media use was associated with increased rates of anxiety and depression among youth (**Kross et al., 2013**).

In addition to social comparison, the fear of missing out (FOMO) had emerged as another influential factor in youth mental health. The constant exposure to others' seemingly exciting and fulfilling lives on social media platforms had led to feelings of inadequacy, isolation, and anxiety. Research had indicated that FOMO was associated with increased levels of stress, depression, and social anxiety among young individuals (**Przybylski et al., 2013**).

Online harassment, threats, and humiliation had been a few other detrimental aspects of social media that had led to increased levels of stress, anxiety, and depression among victims. **Hinduja and Patchin (2018)** highlighted the association between cyberbullying and negative mental health outcomes, emphasizing the need for preventive measures and support for those affected.

Moreover, body image dissatisfaction has become a prevalent issue among youth in the digital age. The exposure to idealized and edited images on social media platforms had contributed to negative body image perceptions and disordered eating behaviors. **Fardouly et al. (2015)** had conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis, which had indicated a significant relationship between social media use and body dissatisfaction.

A meta-analysis conducted by **Woods and Scott (2016)** had conclusively revealed a significant positive correlation between social media use and both anxiety and depression.

Transgenerational Effect on Generation Alpha

The transgenerational effects of social media usage on future generations are what needs to be critically examined. Parents who had grown up in an era heavily influenced by social media had carried their own emotional scars, affecting their parenting styles and the well-being of their children. **Turner et al.** had reported a strong association between parental anxiety disorders and increased odds of anxiety disorders in children.

So the problem that arose was that most of **Generation Z**, who had significantly been part of the social media audience, were statistically prone to have mental health issues such as anxiety and depression, as seen in a study conducted by Dr. Mark Becker of Michigan State University (**MW Becker et al., 2013**) who had found a 70% increase in self-reported depressive symptoms among the group using social media and a 42% increase in social anxiety unless proper use of the platform was made. These mental issues were likely to affect their relationships and parental behaviors, and being intergenerational in nature, would shed a negative impact on their children too.

This intergenerational transmission of anxiety had highlighted the potential impact of parental mental health struggles on the psychological well-being of the next generation, **Generation Alpha**. For instance, **Ginsburg et al. (2018)** examined the intergenerational transmission of anxiety disorders and found that children of parents with anxiety disorders were more likely to develop anxiety themselves. The researchers had emphasized the importance of addressing parental anxiety to break the cycle of transgenerational mental health issues.

Marital & Social Relationships

The intrusion of social media into marital relationships has been a growing concern. Studies had indicated that excessive social media use was associated with increased rates of infidelity, decreased relationship satisfaction, and overall marital quality. **Clayton et al. (2013)** had found that higher levels of Facebook-related conflict and surveillance were associated with lower relationship satisfaction and increased chances of negative relationship outcomes, such as infidelity and breakup.

Another study by **Muise et al. (2009)** had investigated the role of social networking sites in romantic relationships. The research had revealed that excessive Facebook use was associated with negative relationship outcomes, including jealousy, decreased trust, and increased chances of emotional and physical infidelity. The authors had suggested that social media platforms could facilitate opportunities for covert interactions and could blur the boundaries of appropriate behavior in relationships.

Ziba Barghi Irani et al. (2019) had mentioned in her study that the real problem here was the replacement of couples' interaction with virtual social networks, and unwittingly, men and women had engaged in inaccurate, deceptive communication in these networks. This had eventually led to emotional detachment and unavailability, resulting in permanent divorces in the country, primarily due to the inadequate use of cyberspace.

Not just marital relationships, but social media had also defied the actual purpose for which it was built in the first place, that is to build a healthy social network. Rather, social media has been turning the youth into one of the most antisocial generations yet. They prefer texting to phone conversations, online chat to face-to-face meetings; it has fostered a false sense of online “connections” and superficial friendships, leading to emotional and psychological problems. The distinction between genuine friends and acquaintances has become blurred ([Jacob Amedie Santa Clara University, 2015](#)).

It is, therefore, of utmost importance to conduct further research into these issues and devise strategies to mitigate the detrimental impact of social media on individuals and their families. Given that the long-term effects on the next generation may not yet be fully observable, proactive measures are crucial to address these issues before the consequences escalate.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

Examine the Influence of social media on Youth Mental Health.

2. **Analyze Transgenerational Effects of Generation Z Mental Health on the Generation Alpha.**
3. **Study the Impact of social media on Marital Relationships.**
4. **Promote Awareness and Dialogue on Digital Age Challenges and ways to deal with it.**
5. **Lay the Foundation for Future Research and Intervention.**

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Methodology:

This research employs a quantitative-method approach to comprehensively investigate the multifaceted impact of social media on youth mental health, marital relationships, and its potential transgenerational effects on Generation Alpha. By using quantitative data collections, a holistic understanding of these interlinked phenomena will be attained.

Study Design:

The study follows exploratory design to capture a snapshot of the participants' experiences and perceptions concerning social media, mental health, and relationships.

Sample:

The primary data was gathered through an online survey form circulated among youngsters (15-24). The target audience for this research were students between the ages of 17-22. The sample size of the study is 110 students, chosen through convenient sampling for its practicality and accessibility.

Tools of Data Collection:

Quantitative Data: A structured survey questionnaire was developed, drawing inspiration from validated scales like the [social media addiction scale](#) and the [depression, anxiety stress scale](#) (DASS21) previously conducted research. The survey collected demographic data, social media usage patterns, mental health indicators, perceptions of marital relationships and transcendence of mental issues from parents to children. In this context, the questionnaire had a total of 10 statements, most of whose relevance were assessed by the respondents on a five-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree; 5=Strongly agree).

Tools for Data Analysis:

Quantitative Data: Statistical analyses will be performed using software such as SPSS. Descriptive statistics will summarize demographic and usage data, while inferential statistics (correlation analysis) will reveal associations between social media usage, mental health indicators, and relationship perceptions.

Exploratory factor analysis was used to identify the factorial structure of Negative and positive effects of social media. The descriptive statistical measures (arithmetical means and standard deviation) were used for establishing the relevance and homogeneity of respondents' opinions. Before applying the factor analysis, Kaiser- Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's test of sphericity were used for establishing whether the data were suitable for conducting factor analysis.

Ethical Considerations:

Ethical guidelines were followed throughout the study, ensuring participant confidentiality, informed consent, and voluntary participation. Participants were informed of the study's purpose, procedures, and potential implications only.

Survey Results: Validating the Research Paper's Forecasts on the Impact of social media

The survey aimed to explore the intricate relationship between social media usage and various aspects of individuals' lives, aligning with and validating the core arguments and predictions presented in the research paper.

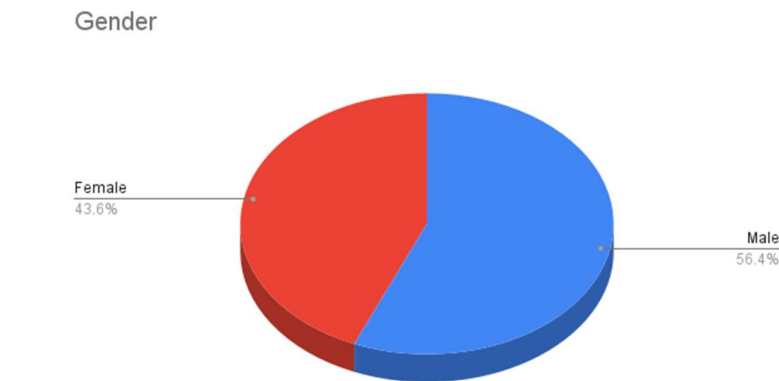
Reliability Test

A reliability test was conducted on the identified independent variable-Social media usage impact factors. The reliability coefficient of the study variables has more than the minimum acceptable level of 0.60. (NLM 2016). Table1, shows the Cronbach's Alpha value for all the factors namely, Mental health & social relationship, Positive correlated impact & Dissatisfaction and subsequent effect on Gen Alpha all were found to be equal to 0.7, which is considered acceptable.

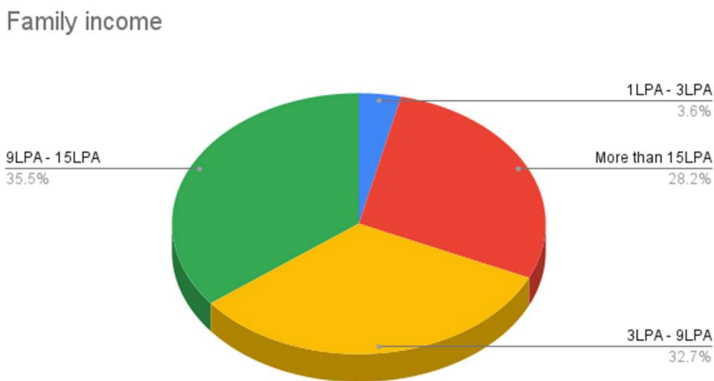
Factor Analysis

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value was found as 0.743 which shows the data is adequate for factor analysis and Bartlett's test of Sphericity (chi square: 153.124 sig: 0.000) has proven the existence of a general relationship between the variables (Table 2).

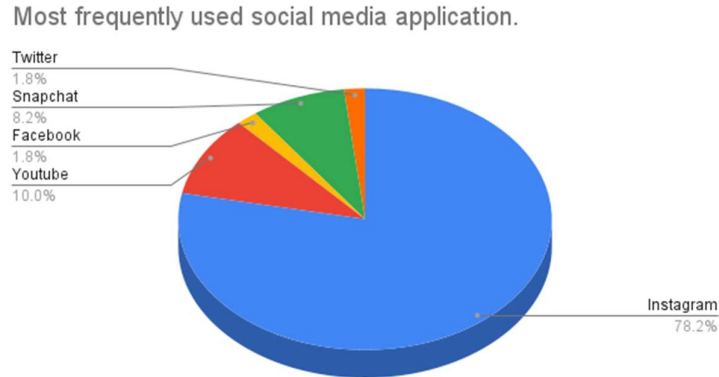
Demographics:



1. In the pie chart, males account for 56.4% of social media users, while females make up 43.6%. This visual representation illustrates the gender distribution among individuals who participated in the survey on social media usage.



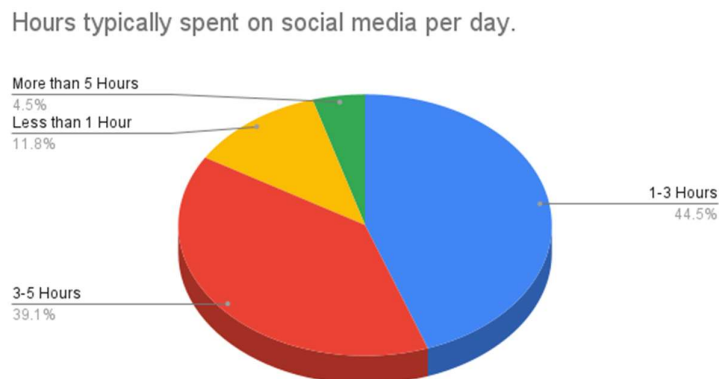
2. The given pie chart represents the family income of individuals who participated in the survey on social media. The chart is divided into several slices, each representing a different income category. The sizes of the slices correspond to the percentage of respondents in each income category.



3. The above pie chart represents the most frequently used social media applications by individuals who participated in a survey on social media. The sizes of the slices correspond to the percentage of respondents who indicated that they use each platform the most.

- Facebook: 1.8 %
- Instagram: 78.2%
- Twitter: 1.8%
- YouTube: 10%

In this pie chart, INSTAGRAM is the most frequently used social media application, accounting for the largest slice, followed by YouTube, Snapchat, Facebook and Twitter, In descending order of usage frequency.



4. Above pie chart represents the distribution of the number of hours typically spent on social media every day by individuals who participated in a survey on the perils of social media:

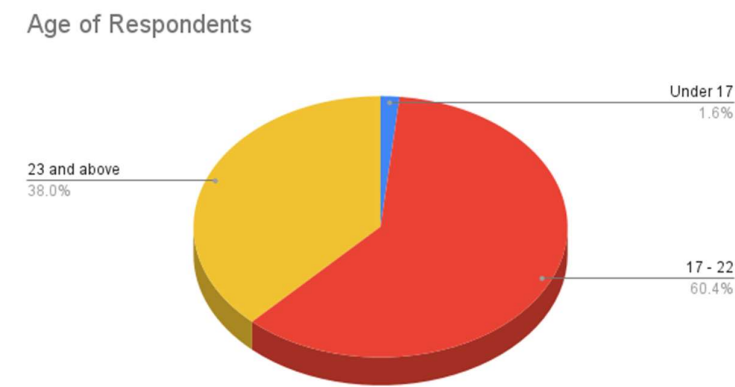
- Less than 1 hour: 11.8%
- 1-3 hours: 44.5%

3-5hours: 39.1%

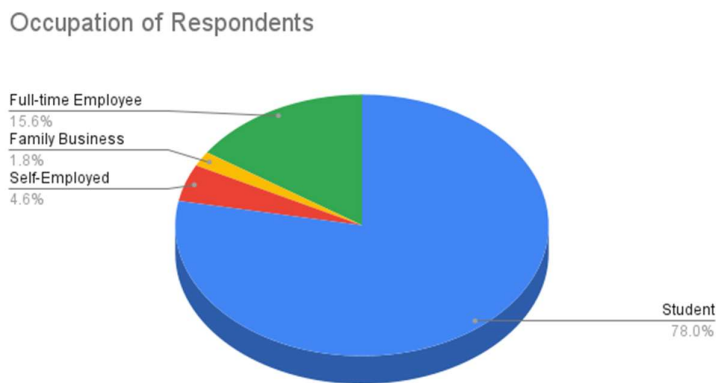
More than 5 hours: 4.5

This pie chart illustrates how survey participants allocate their time on social media platforms each day. It's clear that a significant portion (44.55%) spend 1-3 hours on social media, followed by 39.1%% spending 3 -5 hours. The chart also shows that 11.8% use social media for less than 1 hour, and the remaining 4.5% spend more than 5 hours daily.

This data is useful for discussing the potential perils of excessive social media use, as it highlights that a substantial portion of respondents are dedicating several hours each day to these platforms. These findings could lead to discussions on the impact of excessive screen time, reduced productivity, and potential negative effects on mental well-being.



5. Above pie chart illustrates the age distribution of respondents who participated in the survey. This chart is divided into slices, each representing a different age group, with the size of each slice corresponding to the percentage of respondents in that age group.



6. The given pie chart visually represents the distribution of occupations among respondents who participated in the survey. The chart is divided into slices, with each slice representing a different occupation category. The size

of each slice corresponds to the percentage of respondents in that occupation.

Research revealed a substantial student representation (78%) and a notable percentage of Full-time employed individuals (15.6%). Family income distribution varied, with 35.5% of them earning between 9LPA - 15LPA and a significant 28.2% surpassing 15LPA. The dominant age group was 17-22 (60.4%), with a balanced ratio of male and female respondents.

DISCUSSION

In this empirical study, factor analysis was used to identify the major factors of social media that have the most impact, both negative and positive, on the target audience. Total variance explained by the derived factors was 64.7 percent. Initially, there were 10 statements that were measured. After factor analysis, 3 factors were created. These factors were named as:

1. Mental health & social relationship
2. Positively correlated impact.
3. Dissatisfaction and subsequent effect on Gen Alpha

Mental health & social relationship:

The primary factor that has come to the forefront of our research is the intricate relationship between "Mental Health and Social Relationships" in the context of excessive social media usage. This factor sheds light on the profound impact that extensive engagement with social media can have on an individual's mental well-being, with outcomes that are often negative in nature. This negative impact manifests as a breeding ground for mental health issues such as heightened anxiety, depression, and diminished self-esteem, echoing findings from numerous scholarly studies (**Primack et.al 2017**).

The adverse effects on mental health don't exist in isolation. They have a far-reaching impact on an individual's ability to focus and concentrate on their daily activities. The constant state of hyper-stimulation induced by the relentless onslaught of social media content and lifestyle comparisons takes a toll on one's cognitive abilities. This mental overstimulation can lead to decreased productivity, difficulties in sustaining attention, and an overall reduction in one's capacity to effectively engage in daily pursuits (**twenge, J. M., Campbell, W. K., & Campbell, S. M. 2018**)

Another noteworthy aspect within this factor is the intricate correlation between mental health and one's romantic relationships. Our research findings have illuminated that social media usage often becomes a breeding ground for jealousy between partners. The culture of social comparison and the presentation of curated, idealized lives on these platforms can provoke feelings of insecurity and mistrust within relationships. This jealousy, in turn, disrupts the harmony of romantic partnerships, further exacerbating the negative impact on mental well-being (**Muise, A., Christofides, E., & Desmarais, S. 2009**)

Positive correlated impact:

The second pivotal factor elucidated by our research is the "Positive Impact of Social Media." This factor prominently underscores the transformative influence of social media in effecting positive change in various aspects of individuals' lives. Our comprehensive survey analysis reveals that a substantial majority of respondents actively utilize social media platforms to acquire knowledge, embark on educational journeys, and cultivate valuable social connections.

A noteworthy segment of survey participants attested to harnessing the potential of social media as a powerful tool for self-improvement and knowledge enrichment. The digital landscape of social media serves as an expansive repository of information, enabling users to explore a diverse range of topics, engage in self-directed learning, and broaden their intellectual horizons. This aspect effectively transforms social media into a dynamic educational ecosystem, empowering users to augment their knowledge base and personal growth (**Boyd, D., & Ellison, N. 2008**).

In addition to its educational merits, social media has emerged as a dynamic arena for fostering meaningful social relationships. Many individuals find these platforms to be instrumental in forging new friendships, connecting with acquaintances, and expanding their social networks. By enabling users to interact with like-minded individuals and share experiences, social media plays a pivotal role in cultivating a sense of belongingness within specific interest groups or communities (Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C., & Lampe, C. 2007)

Moreover, the expansion of education and social networks facilitated by social media has paved the way for entrepreneurial opportunities. Individuals are increasingly leveraging these platforms to promote their businesses, products, and services. The ability to connect with a targeted audience that shares an affinity for their offerings is a significant advantage. This targeted approach streamlines marketing efforts and enhances the likelihood of reaching receptive customers, thereby contributing to business growth and success (Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010)

Dissatisfaction and subsequent effect on Gen Alpha:

The third significant factor that our research has brought to light is the "Dissatisfaction and Its Subsequent Impact on Generation Alpha." Our comprehensive factor analysis has unearthed a disconcerting trend: excessive social media use among young individuals has precipitated a notable decline in overall satisfaction, particularly among the younger Generation Alpha. This decline can be attributed to pervasive feelings of inadequacy and a marked decrease in self-esteem. Compounded by the unhealthy tendencies of making detrimental social comparisons and portraying an idealized or perfect life on social media, these factors collectively erode the sense of contentment and fulfillment among today's youth.

This pervasive dissatisfaction doesn't merely stand in isolation; it has profound ramifications for emotional well-being and the dynamics of interpersonal relationships. It's noteworthy that this state of dissatisfaction significantly affects an individual's emotional availability within their relationships, be it with friends or romantic partners. The constant pursuit of an unattainable ideal, fostered by the curated façade on social media, impedes the ability to engage authentically and emotionally with others. Consequently, it casts a shadow over mental well-being, contributing to heightened levels of anxiety and stress. (Twenge, J. M., Campbell, W. K., & Campbell, S. M. 2018)

What's particularly concerning is the far-reaching impact of this negative mental state. Our research suggests that this dissatisfaction doesn't end with the individual but transcends into the next generation. In essence, it gives rise to an intergenerational cycle of discontent and emotional turmoil. This cycle has the potential to influence the emotional well-being and psychological development of the offspring of these individuals, creating a ripple effect that extends into Generation Alpha and beyond (Primack, B. A., Shensa, et.al 2017).

INFERENCE:

Social Media Usage:

The survey findings confirmed the assertions put forth in the research paper, affirming the entrenched presence of social media platforms in everyday life. Among these platforms, Instagram emerged as the most frequented at 78.2%, followed by YouTube at 10%. The data unmistakably reflected the prevalence of social media usage, with 44.5% of respondents dedicating 1-3 hours daily, and 39.1% allocating 3-5 hours to their social media engagements.

The demographic breakdown revealed intriguing patterns. While the number of male users slightly exceeded female users at 56.4% and 43.6%, respectively, it was noteworthy that females tended to spend more hours daily on social media. Additionally, students (78%) demonstrated a greater capacity to invest time in social media compared to working professionals (15.6%) and self-employed individuals (4.6%). This aligns with the observed variations in the positive and negative impacts of social media, which appeared to be more pronounced among students.

Regarding family income, the data showed no significant differences in daily social media usage across income levels. Instead, the variance largely depended on the discretionary free time available to individuals, which they chose to allocate to social networking apps. Notably, the survey highlighted a diverse range of motivations for using social media: 73.6% cited connecting with friends and family, 58.2% for staying informed, and 50.9% for

educational purposes.

Positive Aspects of social media:

Survey participants echoed the research paper's assertions about the positive aspects of social media. A significant majority (77.7%) recognized its capacity to foster a sense of support and belonging within like-minded communities. Moreover, 73% affirmed that social media enhances educational opportunities and facilitates knowledge sharing. These findings aligned with the research's stance on social media's potential for positive social change, with 43.6% of participants acknowledging its transformative potential although 42.6% adopted a neutral stance on this question. A significant 92.6% agreed that social media effectively promotes business marketing and customer engagement, affirming its economic relevance. These factors being correlated give rise to one another on some level as discussed in the factor analysis. (Table 1)

Perils of social media:

The survey results resonated strongly with the research paper's cautions about the potential negative impacts of social media. An overwhelming 83.7% of participants concurred that social media significantly impacts mental health, possibly leading to anxiety and depression. **Perloff's work (2014)** highlights social media significantly contributes to the intensification of anxiety by virtue of its constant promotion of social comparisons and the presentation of idealized self-images. These platforms have evolved into potent agents that magnify and sustain feelings of unease and nervousness. Engaging in excessive social media usage behaviors was strongly and openly associated with heightened symptoms of depression. (**Shensa et al. 2017**)

This mirrored the research paper's concerns. Furthermore, 79.1% agreed that social media adversely affects students' concentration on education, supporting the prediction that excessive digital engagement could hamper educational focus. This turns out to be ironic when in fact among the primary usage of social media is to enhance knowledge and help oneself in education. Rather students going online and using social networking applications while studying were found to score 20% lower on tests as seen in research conducted by **bhardwaj et.al (2017)**.

Married couples are not immune to the perils of social media. Notably, the findings regarding the impact of social media on romantic relationships echoed the research, with 71.9% acknowledging its potential to evoke feelings of insecurity and jealousy. **Papp et al. (2012)** identified social media's role in emotional infidelity, corroding trust and emotional availability in marriages. **Clayton et al. (2013)** revealed that excessive Facebook usage can fuel jealousy and erode relationship satisfaction among couples.

A similar sentiment was reflected in the belief of 52% of participants that frequent social media use could diminish emotional availability in romantic partnerships. Furthermore, 66.4% believed that social media fuels social comparison and promotes idealized portrayals of life, substantiating the research's argument that this phenomenon can contribute to lower life satisfaction. These results support the notion that the blurry lines between the digital and real world can strain healthy communication and ultimately destabilize strong relationships.

Parental Influence and Impact on the future Generation Alpha:

Survey outcomes reinforced the research paper's hypothesis regarding the potential influence of parents' emotional states on their children's well-being. Impressively, 82.8% of participants subscribed to the notion that parents' emotional well-being can profoundly shape their children's upbringing. Additionally, responses concerning social media's impact on mental health closely mirrored the research, with 36.4% of respondents considering social media detrimental to their mental well-being. Notably, 46.5% acknowledged that social media's impact could encompass both beneficial and detrimental aspects, reflecting its complex and multifaceted nature.

This paper illuminates how the adverse effects of social media on parental mental health and relationships reverberate through the lives of Generation Alpha. **Smith et al. (2020)** conducted a longitudinal study that demonstrated the lasting impact of parental mental health issues, triggered by social media, on the emotional well-being of their children. This supports the idea that the emotional burdens carried by parents, shaped by their exposure to social media, negatively influence their parenting methods and thus affect the mental well-being of the next generation. The observed increase in depressive symptoms and social anxiety within the Generation Z cohort adds weight to the concern that these problems could extend to the Generation Alpha.

In conclusion, the findings of this study unquestionably validate the core ideas and predictions of the research paper. The established connection between social media, youth's mental health, relationships, and the potential consequences for Generation Alpha vividly highlights the urgency of addressing these concerns. This alignment reinforces the research paper's call for taking action to create a digital environment that promotes the well-being of individuals, families, and the upcoming Generation Alpha.

CONCLUSION

In the realm of youth mental health, the consequences of excessive social media use are stark. The survey revealed a paradoxical trend: a substantial portion of respondents were well-aware of potential solutions to mitigate the detrimental effects of excessive social media use. They possessed an understanding of how to counteract its negative impacts. However, what struck as ironic was that a majority of individuals, despite acknowledging the harm and recognizing the long-term consequences, continued to engage with these platforms recklessly.

The fundamental objectives that drive people to use social media—such as education, social interaction, and the formation of meaningful connections—often seemed to run counter to the very outcomes they sought. Instead of enhancing education, it was observed that excessive usage negatively affected it. Rather than fostering positive social interactions, it often strained social relationships. And surprisingly, even in the quest to build meaningful networks, the impact could be decidedly adverse.

This paradox underscores the powerful allure of social media, which, despite the awareness of its detrimental effects, continues to exert a strong influence on individuals' behaviors and choices. It serves as a reminder of the complex interplay between human psychology and the digital world, where intentions and outcomes do not always align as expected.

However, social media's impact isn't solely negative; it possesses a myriad of positive attributes. It effectively bridges geographical divides, facilitating close connections with friends and family across distances. Moreover, it acts as an outlet for creativity, allowing us to share our passions with a worldwide audience. The potential for networking is vast, fostering both personal growth and professional advancement. Furthermore, its role in disseminating knowledge and raising awareness, offering support to marginalized communities, and providing a platform for authentic self-expression is invaluable. These benefits exemplify the wealth of advantages social media offers. However, the key lies in striking a harmonious balance. The perils of social media have cast a complex shadow, but through mindful engagement and informed action, we can illuminate a path towards a more balanced and harmonious digital existence.

RECOMMENDATIONS & SUGGESTIONS:

1. **Promote Digital Well-being Education:** Schools, colleges, and community organizations should incorporate digital well-being education into their curricula. Educating young individuals about responsible social media use, healthy online boundaries, and the potential consequences of excessive usage can empower them to make informed choices.
2. **Parental Awareness Programs:** Initiatives should be launched to educate parents about the potential impact of their own social media usage on their children's mental health. Providing parents with strategies to model healthy online behavior and create balanced family routines can contribute to reducing transgenerational effects.
3. **Introduce Digital Detox Campaigns:** Governments and non-governmental organizations can collaborate to promote digital detox campaigns. Encouraging individuals, especially youth, to take breaks from social media and engage in offline activities can alleviate mental health issues related to constant digital exposure.
4. **Counseling and Support Services:** Educational institutions and workplaces should offer counseling and support services to address mental health challenges arising from social media usage. Providing accessible mental health resources can help individuals cope with anxiety, depression, and other psychological distress.

5. **Balanced Technology Use:** Encourage individuals to adopt a balanced approach to technology use. Setting boundaries for screen time, engaging in offline hobbies, and prioritizing face-to-face interactions can contribute to improved mental well-being and healthier relationships.
6. **Longitudinal Studies:** Conduct longitudinal studies to track the long-term effects of social media on youth mental health, marital relationships, and subsequent generations. This will provide deeper insights into the evolution of these issues over time and the effectiveness of interventions.
7. **Proactive approach:** Providing counseling services to couples and their children who are grappling with mental health issues and actively treating their anxiety can prevent further escalation and minimize the likelihood of its transmission to the next generation. While this does not establish a direct causal relationship, it does indicate that targeting children who are at risk of anxiety disorders in the context of parental anxiety disorders can yield positive outcomes. Based on findings the potential value of developing preventive programs that identify at-risk individuals based on specific parental anxiety disorders is significant.
8. **Social Media Platform Responsibility:** Social media platforms should continue to enhance features that promote healthy usage, such as screen time tracking, content filtering, and user well-being notifications. Additionally, they should invest in research to better understand and mitigate negative consequences associated with their platforms and take corrective measures.

In conclusion, addressing the perils of social media requires collaborative efforts from individuals, families, educational institutions, policymakers, and social media platforms. By implementing the above recommendations and suggestions, we can strive to create a digital landscape that supports the mental health, relationships, and well-being of both current and future generations.

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ANNEXURE

Table 1: Reliability Indices

MEASUREMENTS	NUMBER OF ITEMS	CRONBACH ALPHA
Mental health & social relationship.	3	.700
Positive differences made by social media.	3	.700
Dissatisfaction and subsequent effect on Gen Alpha.	4	.700

Tabel 2: KMO AND bartlett's Test

Kaiser-meyer-olkin measure of sampling Adequacy.	.743
Approx, chi- square	153.124
Bartler's Test of sphericity	-
Df	45
Sig.	.000

Table 3: COMPONENT MATRIX

Factors	Statements	Statements load	Factor Load
Mental health & social relationship	Affects Concentration	0.792	1.769
	Jealousy among partners	0.448	
	Mental health	0.529	
Positively correlated impact.	Education and knowledge	0.482	1.385
	Promotes business	0.489	
	Provides belongingness	0.414	

Dissatisfaction and subsequent effect on Gen Alpha	Reduced emotional availability		1.903
		0.435	
	Lower overall satisfaction		
	Creates positive difference	0.445	
	Impact of parent's mental health	0.577	
		0.446	